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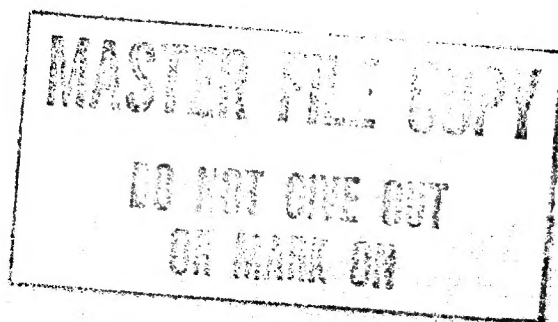
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Morocco: Prospects for Key Opposition Groups

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An Intelligence Memorandum



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*Information available as of 7 May 1982
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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted]
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**Morocco: Prospects for
Key Opposition Groups**

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Summary

In the short run, King Hassan II should be able to maintain his tight control of Morocco's patronage-based political system with little difficulty. The current calm masks fundamental political and economic problems, however, that probably will generate frequent outbreaks of civil disorder and government repression in the mid-1980s. If economic conditions worsen and Islamic fundamentalists and the Socialist opposition coalesce, widespread and recurring instability could develop that would threaten the survival of the monarchy.

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The King has manipulated, co-opted, or repressed virtually all legal opposition to his regime and its policies. The Socialist Union of Popular Forces, in recent years Morocco's only credible opposition party, has had its activities severely restricted. Its secretary general, Abderrahim Bouabid, and two other Politburo members were under arrest from September 1981 until last March.

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Militant labor and student movements have been undermined. The Democratic Confederation of Workers, the Socialist-sponsored labor union, has lost most of its membership and is moribund. Its secretary general, Noubair al-Amoui, and all members of its Executive Bureau are imprisoned. The ability of the National Union of Moroccan Students, the country's largest student organization, to initiate peaceful strikes and demonstrations has been largely curtailed, and some of its more radical members have gone underground.

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Relatively strong popular support for the monarchy has inhibited the major opposition groups, and their short-term prospects are not good. All are constrained by ineffective leadership, a disorganized membership, and a fear of government reprisals for even innocuous activities. Morocco's pluralism enables the King to play off factional differences and to provide a measure of political freedom to satisfy temporarily most of the population.

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The government has dealt with opposition from Muslim fundamentalists less harshly than with secular critics. The leaders of Islamic groups have been spared detention, although some lower ranking activists have been

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arrested.



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Such opposition groups will be difficult to control because Islam is an integral part of Moroccan life, and volatile religious sentiments are easily associated with key secular issues. In economic hard times Islamic fundamentalists could become the catalysts uniting diverse political, social, regional, and occupational groups. Such an opposition movement almost certainly would condemn the United States for supporting what it perceives as a corrupt monarchy.



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**Morocco: Prospects for
Key Opposition Groups**



King Hassan II

King Hassan faced serious challenges to his regime in two military-led coup attempts in the early 1970s. He reacted by restricting the movements and authority of his military establishment. Subsequently he abolished ministerial-level control of the military and personally directed field commanders. Through postcoup purges and attrition the senior leaders of the military disappeared. In their place arose officers whose authority was highly restricted or whose loyalty to the monarchy was assured.

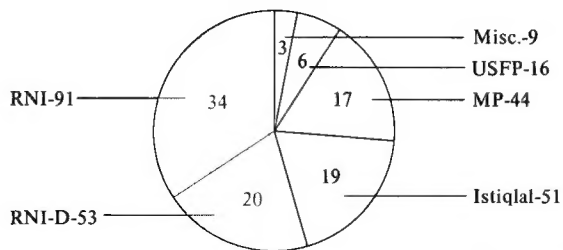
In the mid-1970s Hassan rallied Moroccan society—with the exception of the most radical groups—around the issue of Western Sahara and its incorporation into Morocco. Delegations from all parties participated in the immensely popular “Green March” in 1975, when 350,000 unarmed civilians walked into Western Sahara to emphasize Morocco’s determination to wrest control of the territory from Spain.

In June 1977 the government held carefully orchestrated parliamentary elections, ensuring overwhelming control of the Chamber of Representatives by progovernment parties. Hassan subsequently selected a cabinet with similar progovernment leanings, excluding the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and other left-leaning representatives. This obedient parliament and cabinet are still virtually intact.

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Distribution of Seats in the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives

Percent



NOTE: Shaded portions indicate control by the King.

Party	Leader	Orientation	Seats
Rassemblement National des Independents (National Assembly of Independents-RNI)	Ahmed Osman	Loose grouping of deputies who are supported by and subject to government control.	91
Rassemblement National des Independents Democratiques (National Assembly of Independents-Democrats RNI-D)	Mohamed A. al-Jadidi	Similar to RNI-offshoot of RNI.	53
Istiqlal (Independence) Party	Mohamed Boucetta	Oldest and largest conservative political party in Morocco; led Moroccan independence movement; strong nationalist irredentist outlook; supports constitutional monarchy, Arabization; is the most vociferous defender of Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara.	51
Mouvement Populaire (Popular Movement-MP)	Mahjoubi Aherdan	Rural-based party of Moroccan Berbers; subsidized and strongly influenced by the monarchy.	44
Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (Socialist Union of Popular Forces-USFP)	Abderrahim Bouabid	Only militant political party of the left; strong proponent of political and economic reform that would substantially reduce King Hassan's autocratic powers.	16
Miscellaneous	Various	Several minor political parties, mostly palace oriented, will be unable to exercise significant influence, but their presence serves Hassan's interest in creating the appearance of a broad-based government. Morocco's small pro-Soviet Communist party-Party of Progress and Socialism-is tame, holds only one seat, but does have a significant following in youth and intellectual circles.	9

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The National Assembly of Independents (RNI), the National Assembly of Independents-Democrats (RNI-D), and the Popular Movement (MP)—the parties that make up the progovernment majority in the Chamber—accept the circumscribed democracy allowed by the King. The promonarchy labor unions, such as the Moroccan Labor Union (UMT) and the General Union of Moroccan Workers (UGTM), have formed a formidable coalition with the political parties in support of the King. Even some students are represented by a group that backs the King. [REDACTED]

There are a number of illegal opposition groups that from time to time vent their unhappiness through foreign [REDACTED] media. Their membership apparently is not large, and their activities are monitored by Moroccan police and security forces. The sentiments of the most well-known groups are often leftist, antimonarchy, or fanatically pro-Islamic; their ranks are predominantly alienated youth, and they have programs that are designed to appeal to the university-educated.¹ [REDACTED]

**The Socialist Party:
A Decapitated Force**

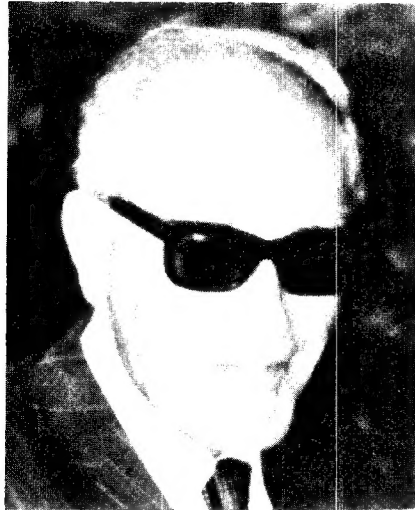
The 16 parliamentary seats held by the Socialist Union of Popular Forces do not reflect the party's potential. The party leadership boasts, with some justification, that it could win a parliamentary majority if free elections were held. [REDACTED]

There has been a running battle between the USFP and Hassan's government over a variety of issues. Many activists were arrested and the party's newspapers shut down for alleged instigation of strikes that led to rioting in Casablanca in June 1981. Socialist criticism of the removal of government subsidies on certain foods was a key issue sparking the protests. [REDACTED]

In September 1981 the government responded to published USFP objections to Hassan's handling of the Saharan issue by arresting party leaders, including Secretary General Bouabid. The USFP position on the issue is more hawkish, and perhaps more opportunistic, than that of King Hassan. He was charged with abusing his authority and advocating a referendum that jeopardized Moroccan retention of the contested territory. The USFP also threatened several times last year to withdraw from parliament to demonstrate the party's objection to the King's circumvention of parliamentary elections in 1981. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Abderrahim Bouabid, Secretary General of the USFP, recently detained for six months for voicing objections to government policies

American Embassy Rabat

Using a combination of patriotic appeals and repression, Hassan persuaded the deputies to return to parliament in mid-October even though elections scheduled for September were not held. Moroccan Royal Counselor Ahmed Guedira appealed to each of the Socialist deputies to attend an extraordinary session of parliament called to deal with the "national emergency" caused by Morocco's military defeat by Polisario forces at Guelta Zemmour.

Under the de facto leadership of acting Secretary General al-Youssoufi, the USFP attempted to regroup toward the end of 1981 and regain support. These efforts were largely unsuccessful. Efforts to attract members from among Moroccan expatriates in France and Spain likewise have not borne fruit. The de facto party leadership has asserted that it has widespread and growing support in Morocco, but it has been handicapped by the detention of its leaders. A new weekly review was allowed to appear, but it has not won the full support of the readers of the regular party organs banned last July.

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For Hassan the USFP issue was an internal one that he would handle at the appropriate time. On the eve of the 21st anniversary of his accession to the throne, Hassan released three senior USFP leaders, including Bouabid. It will be some time, however, before the restored leadership can revive the party. [REDACTED]

**The Socialist
Trade Union:
Disorganized and
Dispersed**

The fate of the Socialist-sponsored Democratic Confederation of Workers (CDT) is very much tied to that of the USFP. Like their counterparts in the USFP, CDT leaders were imprisoned some time ago, but the latter remain in jail without trial. As a result of the disorganization of the CDT, the pro-monarchy Moroccan Labor Union (UMT) and the General Union of Moroccan Workers (UGTM) have made major inroads among CDT members. [REDACTED]

Morocco's most vocal opposition labor union is thus muted. Concerted opposition to the regime from other unions is highly unlikely because workers are not disgruntled enough to risk dismissal or arrest as a result of protests or illegal strike activity. Fear of losing their jobs to unemployed workers (who may exceed 30 percent of the labor force in some urban areas) and the government's repression of open demonstrations critical of the government have discouraged most workers from demonstrating against their declining standard of living. [REDACTED]

Although antigovernment political activity is a troublesome fact for the government, the growing ranks of the unemployed, whether or not union affiliated, present an ominous potential threat. Those out of work and with little hope for their future could easily be drawn into civil disorders by radical agitators blaming Hassan and his government for current economic and social problems. [REDACTED]

**The Communists:
Discreet Opposition**

The Party of Progress and Socialism, Morocco's tame Communist Party, has one deputy in parliament and claims the support of about 5 percent of the voting population. It is believed, however, to have only 2,000 party members and 5,000 to 6,000 sympathizers. It has confined its activities to acquiring support from student and labor groups and has deliberately avoided becoming enmeshed in major controversies that could cause it to be banned. Before the riots of June 1981 and subsequent arrests and trials, for example, the PPS attempted to coordinate its activities with the Socialists in order to expand its influence. After the June events, however, the PPS put greater distance between itself and the Socialists and gave only lukewarm support to the USFP and CDT. [REDACTED]

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On international issues the party has traditionally followed a pro-Soviet line. Where this approach conflicts with Moroccan Government positions on regional issues, such as the use of Soviet-made weapons by the Polisario in the Saharan war, the PPS supports the government. [REDACTED]

The PPS probably will continue as a loyal opposition. It most likely will gain some following among disheartened Socialists, but it can expect continued censorship of its daily newspaper, *al-Bayane*. There is little potential in the near term for the development of a significantly larger Communist movement, and in the short run the PPS is likely to continue kowtowing to the government. [REDACTED]

Student Dissatisfaction University students on several campuses, especially in Rabat, Casablanca, and Fez, were extremely active in the last few months of 1981. The issues ranged from traditional concerns such as class size, dormitories, and scholarships, to advocating the overthrow of the regime. Student groups have engaged in demonstrations, passive resistance, and violent protest to press these grievances. [REDACTED]

In order to prevent campus unrest, the government last fall stationed armed guards from the Ministry of Education on campuses to prevent conflict between extremist groups. The guards, however, became an irritant to moderate and radical students alike, who felt intimidated and harassed by the guards. This irritant as well as other issues prompted the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM), the country's largest student organization, to stage widespread strikes in early December that resulted in the arrest of several hundred students and numerous injuries. Although only a modest number of students participated in the poorly coordinated strikes, government overreaction and heavyhanded security measures resulted in the closing of some schools, the detention of several student leaders, a hardening of resolve by extremist elements, and the alienation of the generally apolitical student majority. [REDACTED]

Trials were held, and 21 persons were convicted for terms ranging up to three years for disturbing the peace, participating in illegal demonstrations, and membership in clandestine organizations. The arrest and conviction of three UNEM Executive Committee members and the resignation of eight others left only two members of the committee active by mid-January. [REDACTED]

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King receiving a gesture of allegiance at ceremony commemorating his ascension to the throne

Abbas - Gamma ©

Like other key opposition groups, the UNEM is bereft of effective leaders. Moderates within its ranks and the majority of students who have no organizational affiliation have assumed a low profile for self-protection.

The failure of the government to address student grievances or even to open a serious dialogue with students will continue to alienate Moroccan youth and to increase their volatility over the next several years.

Muslim Fundamentalists: A Formidable Challenge There have been recent challenges to Hassan's spiritual leadership from Moroccan Islamic fundamentalists. The Mujahedin Movement, the Islamic Revolutionary Committee, and especially the Islamic Youth Movement under the leadership of exiled radical Abd al-Karim Moti have directly attacked both the person and the policies of Hassan. Besides charges of moral depravity, corruption, and extravagance, the King has been accused of apostasy as a "false god" and as an "enemy of God." Such charges cannot be ignored as most Moroccans tend to hold strong traditional religious views. Moreover, the legitimacy of Hassan's role as monarch is inseparable from and regarded by some as secondary to his spiritual role as "Commander of the Faithful."

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Government reprisals against extremist Muslims have been milder than those undertaken against Socialists and students. Some imams (Muslim prayer leaders) and distributors of antigovernment tracts have been imprisoned. The top leaders of the Islamic organizations, however, have not been detained. The King also has supported the establishment of pro-government religious groups to dilute support for Islamic opposition movements. [REDACTED]

Fundamentalists have been recruiting youth—both students and workers—and have been linking their religious views to problems of the economy, social disparities, and what they view as immorality in the government. They have been encouraged by events in Iran and other Muslim countries where Islamic activism has been taking place. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Outlook

The prospects for key Moroccan opposition groups over the next year are bleak in spite of recent indications that the government may ease its repression of the USFP and CDT. All are constrained by ineffective leadership, a disorganized membership, or a fear of government reprisals even for seemingly innocuous activities. Morocco's "Hassanian Democracy" enables the King to play off rival interest groups and provide a measure of political freedom to satisfy temporarily most of the population. [REDACTED]

The current calm and the disarray among Moroccan opposition groups probably mask a growing threat to the Moroccan monarchy over the next several years. Economic difficulties, rising popular expectations, stresses of modernization, pressures for political liberalization, and the regime's limited ability to meet these demands could generate more frequent outbreaks of civil disorder and government repression in the mid-1980s. [REDACTED]

Morocco's economic difficulties stem from ambitious government spending, declining income from phosphate exports in the 1970s, increasing food imports necessitated by several years of drought, and a diversion of resources as a result of the seemingly endless war in Western Sahara. Even with major improvements in these areas, the economy will take several

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years to show substantial growth given Morocco's high rate of population increase of nearly 3 percent per year which has been sustained over the last 30 years. [REDACTED]

The high population growth rate combined with economically induced migration to urban areas has put tremendous pressures on an already strained economic and social system. Jobs, schools, public services, and housing are sorely inadequate, and most indicators suggest that the gap between the haves and the have-nots will widen. [REDACTED]

It is impossible to predict how severe the pressures must be for serious instability to develop, but it is clear that living standards are declining. The situation is not irretrievable, but Hassan will have to demonstrate astute managerial skill to deal with existing economic and social problems. Hundreds of Moroccans lost their lives or were injured, and more than a thousand demonstrators were arrested in economic-related riots in Casablanca in June 1981 when conditions were not substantially different from the present. [REDACTED]

The refusal of the government to permit the Socialist labor union, the CDT, and its sponsors to participate in May Day celebrations and parades this year affirms the government's determination to nip potential disruption in the bud. The cumulative effect of repeated repression and imprisonment of leaders and members of legal opposition groups will foster growing resentment among regime opponents and encourage the growth of covert, violence-prone opposition. [REDACTED]

More than most other civilian dissidents, opposition from Muslim fundamentalists has the potential to undermine the regime. The appeal of Islamic issues—particularly in economic hard times—reaches well beyond the relatively narrow interest groups that form the traditional opposition and has the power to unite diverse social, regional, and occupational groups. Moreover, Islamic activism has special appeal in Morocco, for despite major adaptations to outside influence, the country has retained a very conservative and traditional Islamic character. [REDACTED]

Closer ties with the United States initially have been well received in Morocco, but they may eventually become the focus of strong opposition rhetoric. Many fundamentalists oppose increased Western influence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] They also are likely to condemn the United States for supporting what they perceive as a corrupt monarchy. [REDACTED]

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